

Nyidron and 13 other nuns sang and recorded songs about the plight of the Tibetan people that were smuggled out of Draphci prison, inspiring those working for peaceful change. Her prison sentence was extended for 8 years because of the recording. In 1998 it was reported that she was badly beaten after trying to protect another prisoner and that she is in poor health.

Phuntsog Nyidron is a peaceful advocate for change who should be released immediately along with the hundreds of other of prisoners of conscience in China. Although we lack specific information on each case, we know that many other Tibetans are mistreated in Chinese prisons as well. Even though China ratified the U.N. Convention against Torture in 1988, it has been reported that more than 70 Tibetans have died as a direct result of torture and inhumane treatment in Chinese prisons.

We must not forget the many other ethnic and religious groups and political dissident persecuted in the PRC today. Serious human rights abuses are carried out against the Falun Gong, Uighur Muslims, Protestants, and Catholics are well documented in State Department Reports on Human Rights and Religious Freedom.

We know that opponents of the regime continue to be unjustly imprisoned and that women continue to be subject to forced abortions. We also know that the government continues to violate international law through forcibly deporting thousands of North Koreans, many of whom are subsequently placed and concentration camps where they face persecution and death.

As both our administration and other world leaders prepare for the annual U.N. Commission on Human Rights in Geneva, I along with many of my colleagues, strongly believe that a strong resolution on human rights in China should be introduced and passed. Given continued and systematic human rights abuses carried out by the regime, anything less would be simply inexcusable.

I strongly urge my colleagues to strongly support passage of this resolution. I call upon the regime in Beijing to release Phuntsog Nyidron and the hundreds of others of political prisoners languishing in China's prisons. And I strongly urge our Administration and other governments to work towards the introduction and passage of a human rights resolution in Geneva.

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of House Resolution 157, which urges the Chinese Government to release all prisoners held for exercising their fundamental rights to freedom of expression, belief, or association.

Thank you, Congressman TOM UDALL for taking the lead in introducing this resolution and for all of your efforts for the people of Tibet. I am proud to be a co-sponsor.

The Chinese Government continues to impose severely repressive measures against any display of support for an independent Tibet. We know the facts. The State Department's Annual Country Report on Human Rights states "... [Chinese] authorities continued to commit serious human rights abuses, including instances of torture, arbitrary arrest, detention without public trial, and lengthy detention of Tibetan nationalists for peacefully expressing their political or religious views."

We know that more than 1 million Tibetans have died under the Chinese occupation.

More than 6,000 monasteries and irreplaceable jewels of Tibetan culture have been destroyed. Tibetans are routinely imprisoned and tortured for non-violently expressing their views. Beatings, prolonged exposure to extreme heat and cold, electroshock, sleep and food deprivation and forced labor are among the techniques used to torture Tibetan political prisoners.

Since China's 1988 ratification of the United Nations Convention Against Torture, more than 70 Tibetans have died as a direct result of torture and inhumane treatment in Chinese prisons in Tibet. Hundreds of Tibetans are currently in prison for peaceful expressions of political or religious belief. I would like to mention a few of these brave individuals.

PHUNTSOG NYIDRON

Phuntsog Nyidron is a nun from outside Lhasa. She has been in prison for 16 years. On October 14, 1989, she participated in a peaceful demonstration to protest China's occupation of Tibet. During the arrest, she and other nuns were subjected to beatings with iron rods, kicks, and punches. She is now the longest serving female Tibetan political prisoner. She is reportedly in poor health and is suffering from a respiratory ailment and severe internal problems.

THE DRAPCHI 14: "SINGING NUNS"

While in a Chinese prison for political crimes in 1993, Phuntsog Nyidron and 13 other nuns secretly recorded songs proclaiming their love for their Tibetan homeland and their families. On the tape, each nun states her name and dedicates a song to her family and supporters.

The tapes were smuggled out of the prison and the recordings were circulated inside Tibet and around the world. These young women became known as the Drapchi 14 and the Singing Nuns.

TIBETAN REFUGEES SENT BACK TO TIBET

I am also concerned about Tibetan refugees sent back to China by the Government of Nepal. Last May, in close coordination with the Chinese Embassy, Nepal deported 18 Tibetan refugees who were seeking safe transit through Nepal. This violates the long-standing agreement that Nepal will turn over refugees to UNHCR to facilitate safe transit to the Tibetan exile community in India.

For many years, Nepal has worked cooperatively with UNHCR. They have earned a strong reputation for their humanitarian approach to Tibetan refugees. I am disturbed by the Government of Nepal's recent actions in violation of international and humanitarian norms. The prison conditions awaiting repatriated Tibetans are harsh. From first hand reports we have learned about the torture and maltreatment of the 18 Tibetans deported by Nepal. Unfortunately, the deportation of Tibetan refugees continues.

On January 9, Radio Free Asia reported on that 21 refugees were deported by Nepalese border security. On January 15, we have learned that three Tibetan refugees were handed over to Chinese border police by Nepalese officials.

We expect Nepal to adhere with its own written policy and turn over all Tibetan refugees to UNHCR. Today we are sending a clear message to the Government of Nepal—the U.S. Government is watching your actions closely.

CONCLUSION

The survival of the Tibetan identity is an issue of urgent U.S. and international concern.

I am proud to stand with my colleagues today to demand that the Chinese Government immediately release all prisoners of conscience in China and Tibet. As we honor the brave and heroic prisoners of conscience, we must heed the guidance of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. He is a constant reminder that the crisis in Tibet is a challenge to the conscience of the world. Unless we are prepared to confront the Chinese Government on the issue of Tibet, we cannot be consistent when we talk about human rights in any other place in the world. We have not forgotten the people of Tibet in their struggle. We must and will continue our efforts.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GILCHREST). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, House Resolution 157.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

□ 1515

CONGO BASIN FOREST PARTNERSHIP ACT OF 2003

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and concur in the Senate amendments to the bill (H.R. 2264) to authorize appropriations for fiscal years 2004 and 2005 to carry out the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP) program, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read as follows:

Amendments:

Page 5, strike out all after line 23 over to and including line 11 on page 6, and insert:

(a) *IN GENERAL.*—There are authorized to be appropriated to the President to carry out the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP) program \$18,600,000 for fiscal year 2004.

(b) *CARPE.*—Of the amounts appropriated pursuant to the authorization of appropriations in subsection (a), \$16,000,000 is authorized to be made available to the Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE) of the United States Agency for International Development.

(c) *AVAILABILITY.*—Amounts appropriated pursuant to the authorization of appropriations under subsection (a) are authorized to remain available until expended.

Amend the title so as to read: "An Act to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2004 to carry out the Congo Basin Forest Partnership program, and for other purposes."

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GILCHREST). Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) and the gentleman from American Samoa (Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on concurring in the Senate amendments to H.R. 2264.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 2264 authorizes the Congo Basin Forest Partnership. This legislation is authored by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SHAW) and by myself. There are several additional cochairs present here. There are four of us as Members of this House who launched the Bipartisan International Conservation Caucus late last year: myself, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SHAW), the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. UDALL), and the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. TURNER).

This bill passed the House unanimously last October. It was amended over in the Senate, and the Senate cut authorization from 2 years to 1 year. Although that is unfortunate, the bill is back from the Senate, and it is time to send this bill to the President's desk.

Let me give Members some observations on this measure. The tropical forests of Central Africa's Congo Basin are a key resource to an estimated 20 million people. These forests play a critical role in sustaining the environment of Africa. The Congo Basin contains the most diverse grouping of plants and animals in all of Africa, including rare and endangered species. These plants and animals are invaluable for many reasons, including their genetic and biochemical information. This information from these species could spark technical advances in medicine, in agriculture, and in industry that would benefit people throughout the world. But this is all threatened, and it is threatened because the Congo Basin forests are, under growing pressures, being clear-cut.

I thought I would just for a moment show the location of these forests in Africa: Gabon, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Central African Republic, Cameroon, this area in Africa.

Ten years ago, the forests throughout this area were virtually untouched. Today logging operations are shrinking these forests at such a rate that one estimate has the logging taking out Congo Basin forest areas at a rate of twice the size of the State of Rhode Island every year. It is estimated continent-wide that Africa has lost at least 10 percent of its forested area in the last generation. Meanwhile, construction of logging roads is putting intense hunting pressure on the wildlife that exists there. At current levels, most species of apes, like the mountain

gorilla and the Eastern lowland gorilla, seen here, as well as the chimpanzee that exists in the Congo Basin, and the white rhino are threatened with extinction. In addition, the large antelope and elephants will disappear from the Congo Basin if action is not taken.

One of the actions that we have urged on the Subcommittee on Africa is the creation of a national parks system in this area of Africa. In 2002, Secretary of State Powell launched the Congo Basin Partnership. He made the announcement in Johannesburg. He traveled to Gabon, and he traveled through the rainforests at that time. The partnership focuses on 11 key landscapes that exist in these six countries. It aims to support a network of national parks, protected areas and well-managed forestry concessions. The partnership is working to combat illegal logging and poaching and other unsustainable practices, and to give local populations an economic stake in the preservation of the forests, including through the development of ecotourism which has great developmental potential for Africans. In fact, the second largest source of foreign exchange right now in Africa is ecotourism. So this is a true partnership with European and other countries making financial contributions into it.

I should recognize the country of Gabon for its dramatic move towards conserving Congo Basin forests. In 1992, President Omar Bongo announced the creation of 13 national parks. Previously, Gabon had no national park system. Since this legislation passed the House last October, President Joseph Kabila of the Democratic Republic of Congo has announced his intention to increase protected area coverage to 15 percent of that vast country which has long been attacked for its natural resources. There are militias that have plundered natural resources in that country.

How vast is the Democratic Republic of Congo; it is as large as the country of the United States east of the Mississippi River. So when national park systems are being set up that are 15 percent of that territory, Members can understand how vast it is going to be.

Across the river is the Republic of Congo, and they have begun an experiment of privately run forests aimed at better managing forest assets. So there is a real African buy-in to this partnership, with six African countries setting up this vast national forest system. The Subcommittee on Africa that I chair held a hearing on the initiative last year. Testifying before us was world-renowned ecologist Michael Faye. Michael has traversed many of Africa's forests, especially in the Congo Basin, and he has had several 400-day treks. Many have read about these walks across Africa in the National Geographic.

This legislation supports conservation efforts by him and others. Conservation is not easy. What Americans take for granted, Yosemite and Yellow-

stone and our park system, that took great foresight and political commitment to make that a reality. Over 100 years ago we led the world here in the United States, and it will be a major challenge to establish and maintain effective regimes to control logging and hunting in the Congo Basin. But with the partnership, the United States is bringing its unique experience and talents to these efforts. In fact, through the partnership, the U.S. National Park Service plans to bring park managers and rangers from Gabon and other countries to the United States to train in our great national parks. That is one of many efforts that will be undertaken under this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) for his management of this legislation. I also want to convey my thanks to the chairman of the Committee on International Relations, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HYDE), and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) the ranking member, for their efforts in bringing this legislation to the floor.

As the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) alluded to earlier, this is a bipartisan effort on the part of himself, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SHAW), the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. UDALL), the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. TURNER), and the leadership of our committee.

Mr. Speaker, the Congo River and its tributaries make up the most extensive network of navigable waterways in Africa, and carry a volume of water second only to the Amazon River. In addition to being a major ecological region in Africa, it is the home to some of the world's poorest people. Throughout Central Africa, poverty rates are among the highest in the world. The actual prevalence of HIV-AIDS is unknown, but we know that poverty and war are the breeding ground for the rapid spread of diseases.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation represents a unique opportunity to help the people of Central Africa to turn their biggest asset, the natural resources of the Congo River Basin, into a viable economic base. Conservation programs will help preserve natural areas and create jobs. The stewardship of the Congo Basin is the joint responsibility of Central African countries and the international community, including our Nation. Together we must end the deforestation and wildlife depletion, and support the appropriate use of the Congo River Basin forest resources.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SHAW).

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, I would like to associate myself with the fine presentation that the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) gave as to the importance of this bill that is before us.

I was privileged to have introduced the Congo Basin Forest Partnership Act, along with the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE), to authorize funding for the Congo Basin Partnership fund. The partnership strives to preserve and protect millions of acres of land in Africa by establishing a network of national parks. The partnership is focused on 11 key landscapes in Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and the Republic of Congo. I have traveled to Africa on numerous occasions, and I have had the experience of seeing the immense beauty and wonder that this continent holds. And I have also witnessed how the poaching and clear-cutting of forests devastates the people, the land, and the wildlife of Africa.

One of America's greatest assets is our national parks and conservation systems. I can think of no better way to help Africa and the African people than to provide them with the tools to conserve their great continent, just as we do in our national parks. Conservation efforts through the partnership not only provide protection for lands and wildlife, but also provide critical means for human development, political stability, and economic growth in Africa, areas that remain tremendously important to the success and to the future of Africa.

□ 1530

This initiative has received widespread support, as the gentleman just pointed out, from Democrats, Republicans and leading organizations, including Conservation International, the World Conservation Society and the World Wildlife Fund.

I urge Members to support this most important bill. This bill perhaps is not on the top of the list of too many Members of Congress, but I had the privilege of traveling there with my wife in the company of Michael Fay and David Barron and going up the Congo River, traveling by airplane, by piro, by pick-up truck, and then piro again and walking into an area by foot with the assistance of some wonderful Pygmy people and being able to watch and actually view these magnificent creatures, the silverback gorillas which are pictured on that easel. Would it not be a poor commentary on humans of this planet if we were responsible for the extinction of the animal most closely related to us as humans? It would absolutely be an indictment, I think, of what we are doing. As was properly pointed out, Gabon has made strides in this area. I did go down and meet with President Bongo in Gabon and have discussed and have had the opportunity

to view some of the wildlife area in that wonderful country.

This is terribly important to the future of the globe. Africa is very much a part of the future of the globe. We see the indiscriminate destruction of the habitat by clear-cutting. These profits are going to Indonesia, France, Japan and other countries that are harboring the companies that are buying the logging rights and then destroying the future of this place. I have seen parts of gorillas hanging in marketplaces for sale as a delicacy. I know firsthand where these magnificent animals are actually used for camp meat by the loggers. Even though it is illegal, they still do it with absolute immunity.

This is a good step but it is only a first step. I think that we need to do more and more and figure out ways that we can attach Federal aid to the preservation of forests throughout the continent of Africa. The environment and ecotourism is the future of Africa in a very large way, and to preserve that will preserve Africa for the world and for the American people.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I am privileged to yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. UDALL), one of our Nation's leading advocates of conservation and the environment.

(Mr. UDALL of New Mexico asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. I thank the gentleman from American Samoa for those very warm comments.

Mr. Speaker, let me at the outset thank the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SHAW) for his sponsorship of this bill. There is no doubt that as a cochair of the International Conservation Caucus he has been a real leader in these international forestry issues. His leadership and hard work, I think, are appreciated by all. As we can see, he feels very passionately about these issues as does the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE). I think this is just a great example of how we can work together as Democrats and Republicans to help the rest of the world to move along to a good, solid path of economic development while at the same time sustaining their resources. That is the reason I rise today in support of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership Act. This is an outstanding new initiative that was spawned from the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002. This program, which includes individuals and organizations across the board—governments, international advocacy groups, NGOs and industries—uses public-private partnerships to enhance the welfare of the Congo Basin Forest.

There is no doubt that the Congo Basin Forest has a significant impact on the global community. Its rich wildlife population contributes significantly to the economic and environmental health in the region. The value of wilderness and biologically diverse areas such as the Congo Basin is im-

measurable. The Congo Basin Forest Partnership works to enhance sustainable development in the region, improve ecotourism practices and prevent harmful activities such as illegal poaching and logging which the sponsor has so eloquently spoken about.

The model offered by the Congo Basin Forest Partnership is one which I believe we can all learn from. The lessons that will come out of this intricate collaboration will serve as a model for local conservation and sustainability issues here in the U.S. I am pleased that the U.S. State Department has made conservation of the Congo Basin Forest a priority. A recent trip with the International Conservation Caucus has highlighted for me the need to take additional bold actions around the world and especially in Africa to preserve the globe's natural resources.

As a cochairman of the House International Conservation Caucus, I would like to thank those in the international community who have spent significant time promoting sustainable development. I would also like to thank my cochairs, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE), the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SHAW) and the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. TANNER), for their diligent work in the Congress on these conservation issues. I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. I again want to compliment the remarks made by my good friend the gentleman from Florida. I certainly appreciate his insight and understanding of this important environmental issue.

There are some 900 million people that live on this continent of Africa, Mr. Speaker. There is a tremendous diversity in cultures of the peoples, even governments. Some governments may not be necessarily stable but the fact of the matter is there is no question that whatever happens in Africa does have very serious implications to our world community. I sincerely hope that our colleagues will support this legislation. I urge my colleagues to support the bill. I again thank my good friend from New Mexico for his leadership and support in providing all the necessary understanding to my colleagues of this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would point out that unfortunately Africa is not the only continent under attack. Increasingly, we are seeing the link between resource exploitation, human rights abuses, conflict and corruption. A report by Global Witness last year details how the ruling military junta in Burma is using logging concessions to help maintain its grip on power. In Burma's environmentally damaging resource diplomacy, Chinese logging

companies are granted concessions to large sections of Burmese virgin forest in exchange for political loyalty and material support. In light of this sort of activity, the Congo Basin Forest Partnership and similar initiatives are all that much more important. I urge my colleagues to support this initiative.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this legislation, H.R. 2264, the Congo Basin Forest Partnership Act of 2003. This bill authorizes U.S. participation in the Congo Basin Partnership (CBFP) that aims to protect 11 key landscapes of more than 30 national parks and thousands of square miles across six countries in central Africa.

The wilderness of the Congo Basin is in a desperate state after years of civil strife, extensive refugee crises, and exploitive logging. These activities have devastated sections of this critical rainforest and have left local people in abject poverty and dependent on unsustainable resource management practices. This bill will authorize the President to appropriate FY 2004 and 2005 funds to the CBFP program. The funding that it promises will allow important goals to be fulfilled: to promote economic development, alleviate poverty, improve the local system of governance, and conserve natural resources through support for a network of national parks and protected areas, well-managed forestry concessions, and assistance to communities that depend on the conservation of the outstanding forest and wildlife resources of eleven key landscapes in six Central African countries (Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Republic of Congo).

Increased funds of up to \$36 million and a funding scheme of up to \$53 million up to 2005 for the Central African Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE) program will allow for the conservation of very precious forest land and the preservation of wildlife that form an important symbiotic relationship.

I particularly applaud CBFP's ability to bring together nations such as Canada, France, Germany, Japan, South Africa, and the United Kingdom—especially in light of our task of standardizing emergency responsiveness on an international level. Also participating in this program are organizations such as the World Bank and the World Conservation Union, NGOs and private sector groups such as the World Wildlife Fund, the World Resources Institute and the Centre for International Forestry Research.

The forestland provides sustenance for a myriad of plant and animal species. They sustain our environment by absorbing carbon dioxide, by cleansing the water, or by holding the soil. Our sources of lumber crops, forests, and tourism play a vital role in our economies. In the last decade, tropical forests have disappeared every year at an average rate of 35 million acres, an area the size of Barbados. The Congo Basin contains a quarter of the world's tropical forest. However, the Forest is being destroyed at a rate of two million acres per year.

H.R. 2264 is a legislative remedy to the crisis that is occurring in the Congo Basin. Therefore, I support its passage, and I urge my colleagues to join me.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2264, the Congo Basin Forest

Partnership Act, and I urge all of my colleagues to vote in support of it. I want to thank Secretary of State Colin Powell, Congressman CLAY SHAW and all cosponsoring members of Congress for making the preservation of the Congo River Basin a priority.

While it is unfortunate that the other body cut the authorization of funds for fiscal year 2005 for this initiative, the \$18.6 million for 2004 will send a strong signal for the need for U.S. investment to preserve the Congo River Basin. The Congo River and its tributaries make up the most extensive network of navigable waterways in Africa and carry a volume of water second only to the Amazon River.

Some of us think first of the Congo River Basin as one of the largest and more important ecological regions of the world, which it is. But, what is more important, it is the home to some of the world's poorest people who have suffered some of Africa's bloodiest conflicts. More than two and a half million people have perished in Eastern Congo as a result of the most recent Congo civil war, with millions left displaced and in unimaginable destitution. Throughout the central African region, poverty rates are among the lowest in the world. Life expectancy ranges from 42 years in the Central Africa Republic to 52 in the Congo Republic.

The overall forest area of the Congo River Basin is declining rapidly as a result of the unchecked growth of timber exports, destructive agricultural expansion, and fuel wood demand for a growing population. These practices are unsustainable if the assets of the Congo River Basin are to be used to improve and sustain the lives of the people who live there.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation represents a unique opportunity to help the people of Central Africa turn their biggest asset—the natural resources of the Congo River Basin—into a viable economic base. The Congo River Basin Partnership is an economic development and conservation program for the six countries of Central Africa. The partnership will combine the preservation of some of the world's richest and most pristine ecosystems with economic development in order to alleviate poverty throughout the region.

Conservation programs will help develop a network of national parks and protected areas, and help local communities better manage the forest and wildlife. People of Central Africa, some of whom live on less than 25-cents per day, will be able to develop sustainable means of livelihood through conservation agriculture and integrated ecotourism programs.

Mr. Speaker, with substantial international efforts, the civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo that engulfed the region has come to an end. The Congolese and other nations in the region are disarming and demobilizing armed groups, planning for national elections, and embracing the rule of law. This is the beginning of a new beginning for post-colonial Central Africa. The politics of the Cold War failed the region, the post-Cold War neglect turned Central Africa into a human disaster. We don't know how long it will take to establish a stable region in the heart of Africa, but we do know we must start.

Mr. Chairman, the Congo River Basin Initiative has created a window of opportunity to help the people of Central Africa rebuild their communities, establish local economies, and bring health care and other resources to their countries. This initiative will help demonstrate

that the stewardship of the Congo River Basin is the joint responsibility of Central African countries and the international community. It is important to note that the first international meeting of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership met in Paris in January of this year to launch a strong effort for international cooperation to preserve the Congo River Basin.

Together, we must end the deforestation and wildlife depletion and support the appropriate use of forest resources. I support this bill and urge my colleagues to vote in favor of its passage.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GILCHREST). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) that the House suspend the rules and concur in the Senate amendments to the bill, H.R. 2264.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the Senate amendments were concurred in.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

RECOGNIZING THE 93D BIRTHDAY OF RONALD REAGAN

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the joint resolution (H.J. Res. 84) recognizing the 93d birthday of Ronald Reagan.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.J. RES. 84

Whereas February 6, 2004, is the 93d birthday of Ronald Wilson Reagan;

Whereas Ronald Reagan is the first former President ever to attain the age of 93;

Whereas both Ronald Reagan and his wife Nancy Reagan have distinguished records of public service to the United States, the American people, and the international community;

Whereas Ronald Reagan was twice elected by overwhelming margins as President of the United States;

Whereas Ronald Reagan fulfilled his pledge to help restore "the great, confident roar of American progress, growth, and optimism" and ensure renewed economic prosperity;

Whereas Ronald Reagan's leadership was instrumental in extending freedom and democracy around the globe and uniting a world divided by the Cold War;

Whereas Ronald Reagan is loved and admired by millions of Americans, and by countless others around the world;

Whereas the recent tragic loss of the space shuttle Columbia and her crew remind us of how, 18 years ago, Ronald Reagan's eloquence helped heal the Nation after the Challenger disaster;

Whereas Nancy Reagan not only served as a gracious First Lady but also led a national crusade against illegal drug use;

Whereas, together Ronald and Nancy Reagan dedicated their lives to promoting national pride and to bettering the quality of life in the United States and throughout the world; and

Whereas the thoughts and prayers of the Congress and the country are with Ronald Reagan in his courageous battle with Alzheimer's disease: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the Congress, on behalf of the American people, extends its